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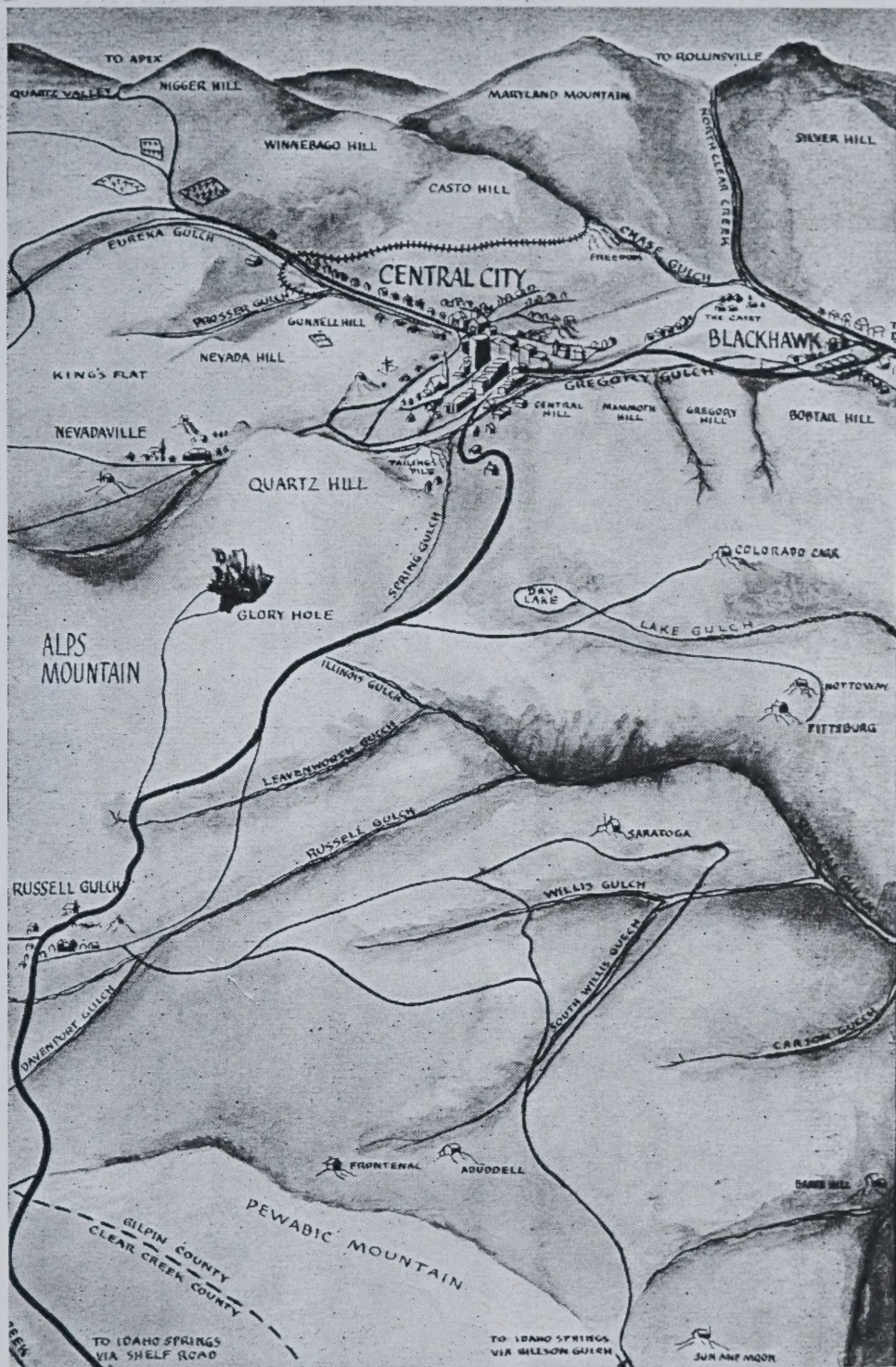
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GUIDE TO CENTRAL CITY

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Airplane View of  
**"THE RICHEST SQUARE MILE ON EARTH"**

—commercially executed from a sketch by M. K.





**A  
GUIDE TO CENTRAL CITY,  
COLORADO**

**and  
ITS SURROUNDING DISTRICT**

**by  
Caroline Bancroft**

**Illustrated  
by  
Margaret Kerfoot**

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### *About the Author*

Caroline Bancroft is a third generation Coloradoan who owns a Victorian brick house on Third High St. of Casto Hill in Central City. She has written extensively for newspapers and magazines, beginning her literary career by joining the staff of *The Denver Post* in 1928. For five years she conducted a column on books and authors and wrote historical feature articles for the Sunday edition. On a travel assignment for the *New York Evening Post*, she interviewed a long list of celebrated authors including Galsworthy in London, Van Loon in Holland, Malraux in Paris and Tagore in Calcutta. Her articles have appeared in such diverse magazines as the *Woman's Home Companion*, *Town and Country*, *Independent Woman*, *New York Herald-Tribune "Books," American Home*, *Junior League Magazine*, *Colorado Magazine*, *Ghost Town News* and the *California Folklore Quarterly*. A bachelor of arts from Smith College, she later in 1943 obtained a master of arts degree from Denver University. The title of her thesis was "Literary Treatments of the Central City District." She is now at work on a fictionized book-length history to be called "Gold Rocked Central City."

### *About the Illustrator*

Margaret Kerfoot is a native of Minnesota who owns an authentic miner's type frame house on Spruce St. of Gunnell Hill in Central City. She studied at the Chicago Art Institute and at the European Atelier of the New York School of Fine and Applied Arts in Paris. She completed a master of arts degree under the distinguished American painter, Grant Wood, at the University of Iowa. She has received Carnegie grants for study at Harvard University and the University of Oregon. For eight years she was a member of the art staff of Carleton College and during the past academic season has been acting head of the art department of Allegheny College in Pennsylvania. Her paintings have been exhibited at the Chicago Art Institute, Kansas City Art Institute, Minneapolis and St. Paul Art Galleries and throughout the midwest.

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## CENTRAL CITY—THE UNUSUAL

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Central City is Colorado's oldest-lived and most historic mining camp, the first tent having been pitched on what is now its Main Street in May, 1859. In fact, the town is perhaps the oldest-lived gold camp in America since, while California camps began in 1849, ten years prior to discovery of gold in Gregory Gulch, most of the California camps were based on placer mining and soon died out. Central City and its allied neighbors—Blackhawk, Mountain City, Nevadaville (at one time, forming a continuous settlement) and Russell Gulch—were based largely on lode gold and have never stopped. They are still going—if not strong—at least, going.

During World War II, the complex ores of several mines provided strategic war minerals such as copper, lead and zinc, as well as their touted gold. Today more mines in the district have been re-opened and are at present under operation, extracting gold. On and on, deeper and deeper, go these mines of the district, adding to the one hundred and twenty-five million dollars' wealth already amassed.

Central City is unusual for another reason,—its architecture. Most Western mining camps were built of wood with only an occasional stone or brick structure. But Central City, after two disastrous fires that wiped out most of the business district in 1873 and 1874, recognized the need for buildings of more durable material. The previously built four-storied brick Teller House (1872) and the three-storied *Register-Call* and Masonic building (1866)





had stopped the lapping flames from raging further up Eureka St. to devour one of the town's richest residential sections. These buildings by barring the way, had actually saved the town. As Central was re-built, the design stressed substantiality.

Today, its well-preserved architecture presents one of the finest examples in the West of a mountain adaptation of elegant Victorian styles. Some parts of the town have kept intact the old-world flavor with two-toned houses in soft colors, iron grilled widow's walks, ornate bay windows and yellow roses gracefully growing over Cornish stonework walls. Parts of the business district, too, have preserved this flavor if the tourist will peer beyond the neon signs and other twentieth century additions to the real lines of the buildings. The high narrow windows topped with stately lintels in contrasting color, the elegant cornices and the rich use of brick and stone are a delight to the historian or the architect.

Central City is unusual for still another reason,—its Pioneer Summer Festival. This three week revival of the "gold days" was begun in 1932 by a group of civic-minded Coloradoans who worked under the sponsorship of the University of Denver and centered their efforts around the re-opening of Central City's unique Opera House. This building had originally been constructed in 1878 by popular subscriptions ranging from \$5 up. The high-calibred citizens of the mountain town at that time wanted a place primarily to display their own talents, but also to welcome traveling theatrical and operatic troupes.

Curiously enough, Central was never as wild as most Western mining camps, nor even as early day Denver. And here again, the town was different from the others in being the only camp to erect a community-owned opera house for their own cultural tastes. Most camps, if they achieved an opera house, received it as the gift from some bonanza king who wanted to make a splash.

That spirit continues today in the productions of the Central City Opera House Association. This organization is run largely by workers who give their time; by artists who donate their





talents for little more than an honorarium, and by Coloradoans who subscribe money to make up a deficit inevitable because of the small seating capacity of the Opera House. Yet the productions have been so high in their artistic standard that the Central City Festival is now world-renowned.

The Cattle West is recreated each year in Wyoming by Cheyenne Frontier Days. The fine aspects of the Indian West are recreated each summer in New Mexico by the Gallup Ceremonial. But it is the Gold West and its optimistic, gambling spirit that our Festivals seek to reproduce. To do this, there is authentic western square dancing exhibited in Dad Williams' stables; there is an exhibit of early Western books and photographs, part of the Anne Evans' Memorial Library; there is a night club and general whoopee with silver dollars clinking on the mahogany bar at the Teller House and everywhere the newcomer is treated to some sidelight of Colorado's Gold Days.

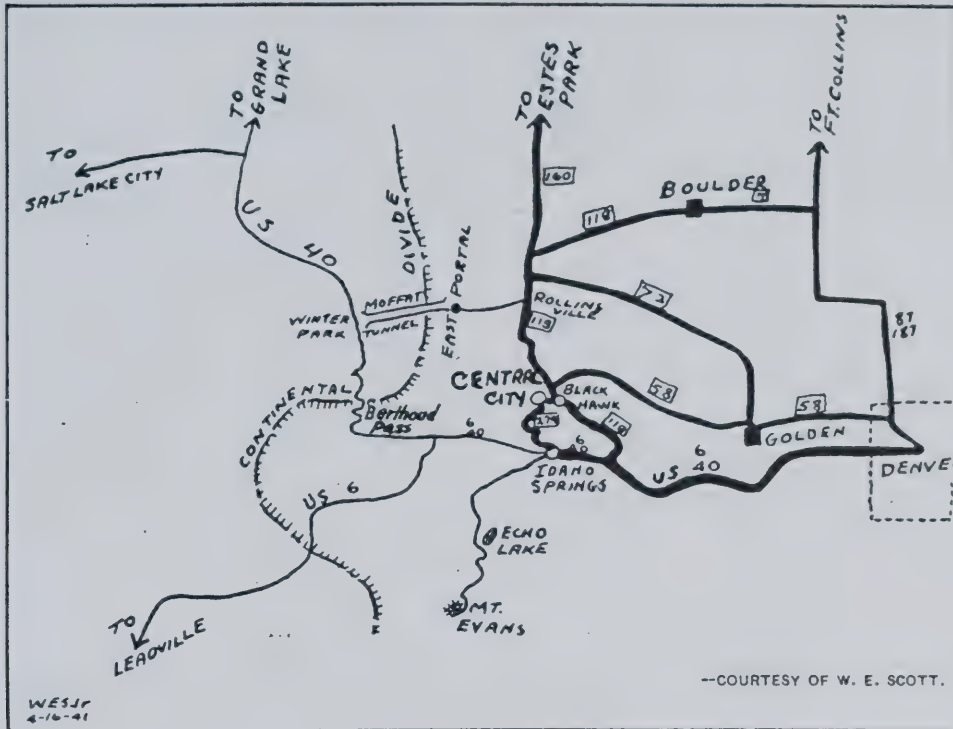
The tourist who sees the camp only during those hectic weeks in July may be so occupied with attractions on Main and Eureka Streets that he will miss the essential flavor of the town and its district. But the place and the surrounding mountains abound with distinguished history, colorful folklore, authentic period architecture, rich mines and spectacular views. The following pages are an attempt to aid the newcomer in getting the most out of a trip to this famous spot, 8,500 feet up. (It was the first place in the Colorado Rockies to start the vogue of blaming everything that goes wrong 'on the altitude!'). The district is high, wide and handsome.

Welcome to "the richest square mile on earth" and to Central City—the unusual. We hope you enjoy them both.





## HOW TO REACH CENTRAL CITY



### *Entering Central City from Denver*

Via U. S. 40 and No. 119, the Peak-to-Peak Highway

As the motorist emerges from the darkness of the third tunnel on this route, he is now in Gilpin County, named for William Gilpin, first territorial governor of Colorado. His automobile is nearing that wealthy district which has been variously known as "The Little Kingdom of Gilpin" and "The Richest Square Mile on Earth." The motorist is no longer following the main fork of Clear Creek down toward the plains, since he has changed direction in the tunnel. He is now pursuing the same route up the North Fork of Clear Creek that John H. Gregory on foot was breaking through heavy timber for the first time in April, 1859.

Gregory was seeking the source of placer gold that had already





been found in Colorado the past summer by William Green Russell in the South Platte close to Denver and that same month, by George Jackson near Idaho Springs. But Gregory, that lonely intrepid Georgian, was looking for a vein. He kept scrambling and stumbling up this same grade along which we now glide.

Beside this road, and sometimes crossing it, runs another grade—that of the Colorado Central railroad, constructed in 1872, and later a branch of the Colorado and Southern. Unfortunately this picturesque relic of the past (so vividly described and photographed in the *Colorado Chronicle* section of Lucius Beebe's "Highball") was taken up a few months before Pearl Harbor and sold for scrap iron. But engine No. 71, a freight car and a passenger coach have been preserved as a memorial to the fantastic feats of pioneer railroading and may be seen close to the freight depots on Spring Street, after arriving in Central City.

Also, near the road and filling the gulch from the tunnel to the town of Blackhawk, are huge mounds of gravel like rocky dunes. These are the dredged remains of seven miles of placer workings. Here, the first pioneers of '59 and the earliest '60s worked with pan, rocker, sluice box and Long Tom, recovering around \$35 a day per man, unless they happened upon a particularly large-sized nugget when the returns soared. In the '70s and '80s, these miles of creek bed were taken over by the Chinese, working by hand. They made what they considered an eminently profitable wage of close to \$10 a day, but minus a large "squeeze" paid to Lin Soy, their leader.

During the depression of the early 1930s, the gulch was again worked by pan and sluice box and in the late 1930s modern dredging machinery and improved methods were applied under the supervision of Edward Manion, mining engineer of Denver. In 1937, Manion recovered \$1000 a day and, from one stretch of 100 feet, is reported to have taken \$35,000.

Shortly, although still a long distance from any visible habitation, the tourist will be surprised to come across a sign "Blackhawk: City Limit." Many of the important mills were located



here during the really lively period of the district's mining, 1859 to 1909, and their buildings continued up the creek banks to Blackhawk. They were the source of lucrative taxes and the town council had lines surveyed to include all the buildings. Today the mills and their activity are gone, but the city limits remain.

As one comes into the town itself, an excellent view of its most historic building can be seen through the windshield. This is the Presbyterian Church, built in 1863. In 1866, Bayard Taylor, popular author, traveler, lecturer and hero—something of a nineteenth century Richard Halliburton—spoke there. In fact, it was one of the few things of the Central City district that impressed him favorably. In his book, "Colorado: A Summer Trip," he called the little steepled structure "pretty."

Also worth noting in this part of town are the excellent examples of carved bargeboard used as architectural trimming on a number of houses dating from the 1860s. One house, on the same side of North Clear Creek as the Toll Gate Saloon, has come to be known as "the lace house" because of the delicacy of its filagree. With a burned-out roof this residence is now in a state of horrible disrepair and citizens of Blackhawk ought to start a fund to preserve for posterity its historic charm.

You turn sharply left in the center of Blackhawk to reach Central and most tourists hurry on up Gregory Gulch toward the more famous town. But the settlement of Blackhawk is quite historic on its own account. Decade after decade, Blackhawk was the milling and freighting center of the district, the narrow gauge railroad having reached here in December, 1872 and continuing in operation until April, 1941. The town was the hub of "the richest square mile on earth," and alive with day and night noise—pestles dropping in the stamp mills, pump engines ceaselessly throbbing, squeaking four-horse ore wagons lumbering through the streets and the whole mixture augmented by alcoholic revelry.

Let us pause briefly to enjoy Blackhawk.







### LOOKING DOWN GREGORY GULCH TOWARD BLACKHAWK

*(This view was sketched from Spruce St. on Gunnell Hill in Central City. On the right is Central Hill with cribbing to hold back the dumps of the Galena mine. On the left is the spur of Casto Hill which is actually named Bates Hill, but is always called colloquially, "The Casey." Beyond, in the distance, are Silver Hill and Dory Hill against which Blackhawk nestles.)*

To achieve the right mood, perhaps a beer at Jennie's should be first. This was formerly Crook's Palace and houses the heavily scrolled and ornate bar that Crook imported at great expense across the continent. It is carved of golden oak, a wood dear to the hearts of the late nineteenth century, and it is not hard to imagine as one gazes into its mirror a line of men reflected there composed of bearded faces beneath miners' slouch hats or more elegantly groomed gamblers with walrus moustaches, derby hats,





string ties, loud check waistcoats and heavy gold watch fobs. Those were the people to whom Crook served his beer.

The most popular spot of still earlier Blackhawk for beer or a "Taos Lightning" beverage (as whiskey was called) was the Toll Gate Saloon whose gutted building still stands. It is across the creek from the juncture of the Dory Hill Road and the Peak-to-Peak Highway and close by the spot where the old toll gate collected its steady revenue. Each traveller had to pay for use of the main stagecoach road up Dory Hill and on to Denver, the rate depending upon the number of horses, mules or oxen he was driving or riding. (One of my private, humorous speculations has been to wonder about the charge for the circus that came to town more than once in the early days—and what the elephants who lumbered over these mountains on foot and through the toll gate thought of these crazy pioneers!)

As one lingers in the wide valley of North Clear Creek which at this point used to hold the passenger depot, a host of recollections about the town of Blackhawk surge forward. It was here in 1867 that Nathaniel P. Hill, later a millionaire senator, built Colorado's first smelter and in the next year, solved the harassing problem of reducing Gilpin County's complex refractory ores. (The Hill residence shaded by two spruce trees was the first one on the left entering Chase Gulch.)

It was here in Blackhawk that George M. Pullman, later made fabulously rich by his invention of the Pullman car, was in partnership with James E. Lyon during the early '60s, banking, mining and milling. (The outlines of the old Pullman and Lyon concentrator's stone chimney may be discerned on the east side of the draw where the Dory Hill road enters the Peak-to-Peak Highway). It was in this town that Edward O. Wolcott, later senator, arrived as a young man in 1871 to teach school.

It was in a building just below that of the Jenkins Hardware that W. L. Douglas tacked hobnails before becoming a wealthy manufacturer of nationally known shoes. It was here that Joseph M. Stanley, as a prospector, came traveling before going off to



search for Livingstone in Africa. And it was here that Colorado's most legendary sheriff, William Z. Cozens, charming 6 ft. 2 "Billy," arrived in the spring of 1860 and got a job serving drinks in a log cabin with a plank set up on two barrels as a bar.

The main business section of contemporary Blackhawk is grouped along Gregory St. running up to Central. Branching off this, on Church St. are some nice homes. But the principal residential part is a cluster of tidy white houses above the fork of the highway, nestled against Silver Hill, or is strung up Chase Gulch in a composite residential and milling section. One house situated up Chase Gulch on an interesting hill street, Du Bois Road, presents still another fine example of early carved bargeboard and I recommend a drive up Chase Gulch past the last houses to get a true feeling of Blackhawk. (It is possible, incidentally, for the intrepid motorist to continue on all the way up to where Chase Gulch turns into Quartz Valley at the colossal granite grandeur of Castle Rock. From there, he may either enter Central City via the Tram grade, or continue on through Quartz Valley to a juncture with the Apex Road and enter Central City via upper Eureka St.)

The choice of the name Blackhawk is somewhat disputed, although there is no doubt about the original Black Hawk. He was a subordinate chief of the Sauk and Fox tribes, Indians that inhabited the present state of Illinois in the early 1800s. He was also the leader of the Black Hawk War of 1832 and waged a bloody battle against the whites. When finally captured, he was taken on an exhibition tour through the principal cities of the East where his appearance 'was an object of great interest.'

In the spring of 1860, one of the earliest mining companies, Lee, Judd and Lee, brought in a quartz mill. Legend reports that this mill was stamped with the name Black Hawk. Accordingly, these men chose the name for their company and from their activities it came to be accepted as the name of the settlement. In 1895, the official post office spelling was changed from Black Hawk to Blackhawk.







## HOW PRESIDENT GRANT REACHED BLACKHAWK IN 1873

*(Engine No. 71, a passenger and a freight car were dedicated in 1941 as a memorial to the pioneers who made mountain railroading the extraordinary feat that it was. This little train and two freight depots are now the property of the Central City Opera House Association.).*

### *Entering Central City from Rollinsville*

#### **Via No. 119—The Peak-to-Peak Highway**

The motorist coming from this direction, enters Gilpin County as he drives past the Los Lagos ponds on the crest of the divide between Nederland and Rollinsville. But he does not really approach "The Little Kingdom" until the rock-crested outlines of Thorodin and Tremont Peaks, seen on his left, and the entrance of Heidi Chalet, also to the east, are left behind, and the car begins to descend into North Clear Creek. From several vantage





points on this route, he will get the most perfect views possible of the real girders of "The Little Kingdom"—the mines of Nevada-ville on the northern slopes of Quartz Hill and Alps Mountain, and those of Russell Gulch on the northern slope of Pewabic Mountain. Spread out before him, they weave a magnificent tapestry of aspen and pine greens, embroidered in the soft oxidized colors of the mine dumps—greys, creams and rusts—and are set against a background of white and granite snow peaks,—Goliath, Evans, Bierstadt, Gray's and Torrey's. The dumps of the formerly big producers,—The Kokomo, the Druid, the Aduddell, and the Frontenac—can be picked out, running high on Pewabic.

This gorgeous view is also seen at the entrance and on the porch of Heidi Chalet, a modest mountain hotel, run by a master of Swiss culinary art whose *vol-au-vent* is known across the state. However, she serves meals only by reservation a week or ten days ahead; so don't drop in and expect to be served.

Soon the tourist will see on his left a small lake where someone is nearly always fishing despite a NO FISHING sign. This is Missouri Lake. It was given nation-wide newsreel publicity in December, 1943, when by cutting through the ice, Fred de Mandel, a retired miner, exhumed a submarine which had been sunken on the floor of the lake since sometime in the 1890s.

Arriving from this direction, the tourist will enter a more spruced-up section of Blackhawk than coming from the south. The creek is fairly clear and the mills that remain have been painted not too long ago. It will be hard to imagine that the whole canyon was once cluttered with mills, smelters, machinery, loading bins, ore cars, railroad tracks and puffing engines. Both the C. & S., which came up North Clear Creek a distance and then switched back on a trestle over Blackhawk in order to make the grade to Central City, and the Gilpin County Tramway, a diminutive railroad, designed for picking up ore at mines throughout "the richest square mile" and bringing it for treatment in Blackhawk, had tracks in this part of the canyon. Today, no tracks remain and there is only a gurgling mountain stream.



## *Entering Central City from Golden*

### **Via Route No. 58 through Golden Gate Canyon**

This road, parts of which 20,000 prospectors trod in the one month of June, 1859, is the old historic stagecoach route. In the half century that Central was queen, it was over this road that countless celebrities drove or rode. It was this road that, even in the 1930s, carried all the main travel for the first years of the Festival. The 1859 route, discovered by Dr. Joseph Casto, so impressed Horace Greeley with its perilous "Hill Difficulty" that he commented on it in two books although the hill was soon eliminated from the route by entering the mountains via the Golden Gate.

But part of the road still traverses Guy Hill, happily at a more easy grade than formerly. F. Barham Zincke, an English vicar and chaplain in ordinary to the Queen, visited Central in 1868 and published a book soon after called "Last Winter in the United States." In this volume, he gave a hilarious description of a stagecoach descent of Guy Hill and then added:

"At Central City where I was staying the next day, I asked the landlord of the hotel if anyone had been killed lately on the Guy Hill. 'No,' he replied, 'no one had been killed,' he was glad to say, 'for two or three years, but every year several persons had died of accidents on the hill.'"

The road is not that bad today. But I do recommend it only for a practised mountain driver, used to rather narrow dirt roads. It is one of the prettiest ways to come to Central and will give one a greater feeling of the past than any other way. But since July, 1939, when the Peak-to-Peak highway was opened, no special effort has been made to keep the road up.

Ovando J. Hollister, later to be a brilliant Colorado historian and editor, driving along this road for the first time in a stagecoach in June, 1860, amused himself on the long ride up by counting the fords—there were fifty-eight. But now the road crosses Tucker





Creek seldom and except for a few miles of shelf construction, will take the tourist through more meadow and ranch land than any other route. It will also treat the beholder to a feast of wild flower color where whole hillsides are massed in penstemon purples and blues, gilia pinks, wild sweet pea yellows and Indian paintbrush crimsons during the early part of the summer.

General Grant came this way in July, 1868, just before he was elected president. He was accompanied by Generals Sherman, Sheridan, Dent, and his young son, Ulysses, Jr. He was driven in a pouring rain to Central City and then on to Idaho Springs and Georgetown where he spent the night and returned by the same route to Denver the next day.

As the motorist follows up Ralston Creek on to the Dory Hill flats, he can picture some one of these spots as being the camping ground of that eminent trio of journalists who were headed toward Gregory Gulch to report on the latest sensation of "the States"—the Pikes-Peak-or-Bust Gold Rush. Actually, it was not Pikes Peak but Gregory Gulch that the '59ers were rushing toward, and Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*, A. D. Richardson of the *Boston Journal* and Henry Villard of the *Cincinnati Commercial*, astride their mules, came along in June, 1859, to find out the truth about those rumors of gold.

They found the gold was a fact. They wrote a joint report when they got back to Denver, two days later, and W. N. Byers of the *Rocky Mt. News* got out an extra to tell the world. He had already reported the news, himself, but this time he could back it up with undisputable authority.

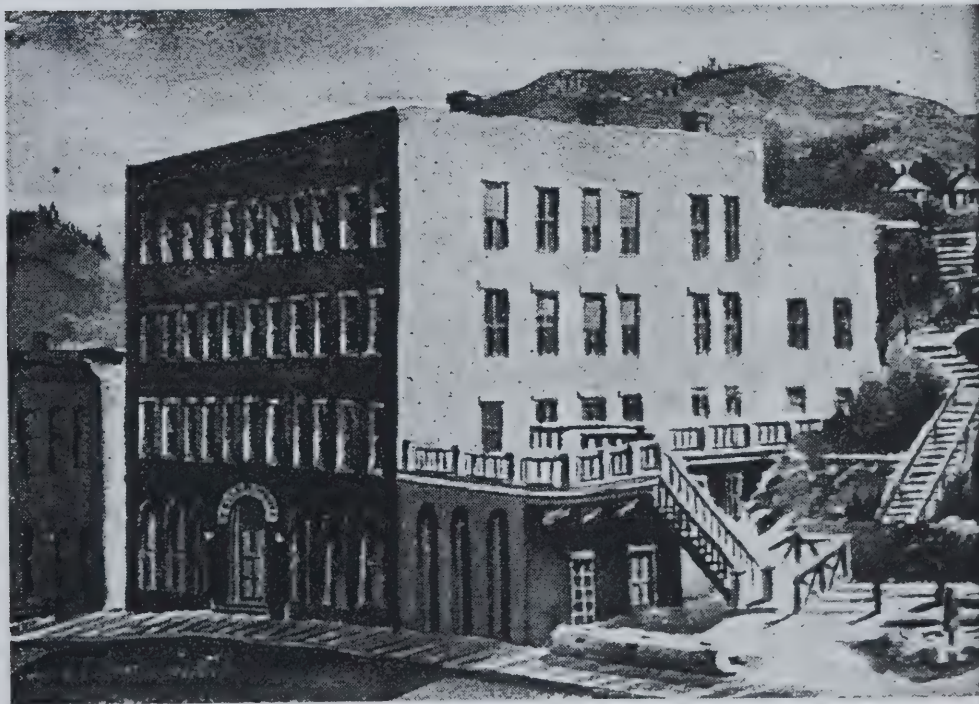
If the motorist is deeply interested in the past, when he reaches the flats, he will want to turn to the left and take the Dory Hill Road down Four Mile Creek gulch and enter Blackhawk opposite the Toll Gate Saloon. That way is the authentic stagecoach route. But if he is more interested in views, I advise him to continue straight on, when he will come into the Peak-to-Peak Highway and can then follow it into Blackhawk via the route already described in the preceding section.



I recommend, however, for anyone who has come this far by the old route, to stick to the original way to the end. The Dory Hill road has collected many stories about it, of which I have written elsewhere (see back page). And it was on this road that Father Macheboeuf's special ambulance overturned, laming him for life. (He is the Father Valiant of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* by Willa Cather and was later Bishop of Colorado.) The road has a true pioneer flavor, an atmosphere of romance and adventure, in keeping with the whole trip—the route of the real Westerner.

### TELLER HOUSE, FAMOUS HOSTELRY

*(This view shows the ticket arcade, decorated inside with old brewery murals, and the balcony on the garden side of the hotel. Lying on the ground are the old hand-bewn pestles taken from early quartz mills and a Spanish arastra used in the summer of '59 to crush ore. The steps lead up the side of Gunnell Hill around to the walk for reaching the Ida Kruse McFarlane Memorial.)*







## *Entering Central City from Idaho Springs*

### **Via Route 279, the Virginia Creek Shelf Road**

The tourist who chooses this way to come, has the most spectacular way of all. The first time that Lucius Beebe and Jerome Zerbe came to Central City in 1937, the late Anne Evans and Ida Kruse McFarlane directed me to bring them that route. Zerbe's photographic eye was enthralled and he hung out the car window at each turn to feast his soul. But Lucius Beebe's only reaction was fright and he sat down on the tonneau floor where he could not possibly see anything at all! (I hasten to add that since that time, Beebe has developed a native Westerner's indifference to heights and road hazards). This road, besides being a shelf road and somewhat narrow in spots, has a dirt surface.

Again, I recommend this route for practised drivers, but with the added enthusiasm that it is wider than Golden Gate and is well kept up. If it is raining, drive with extra caution as it has some spots where the dirt surface has a more adobe than gravel quality and they can be quite slick.

The old road used by ore wagons and the stagecoach went straight up the gulch of Virginia Creek and interlocks with the shelf road. It is still passable, especially the lower half, and may be taken by those who want to save time, are afraid of heights or who want to test the pulling power of their engines. Richard Aldrich, producer of the Festival's "A Doll House," took his 1931 Lincoln clear to the top and claims that nothing more could be asked of a car that knew only the pavements of New York!

The view straight across the canyon shows Squaw Mt. with a fire lookout on top, Chief Mt. rising a little above timberline, and a line running in the timber along these which is the Mt. Evans Highway, then the backs of the snow peaks, Goliath, Evans and Bierstadt, and further over to the west, Gray's and Torrey's. Below these heights you can see Chicago Creek and its road, and if you know where to look, can pick out the spot where in 1863,



Albert Bierstadt painted "Storm in the Rockies," a large scale oil canvas which had a great vogue in the nineteenth century and finally sold for \$25,000.

Below these wooded slopes is the canyon of Clear Creek and every once in a while, between the crags and mine dumps, a view of the town of Idaho Springs. You are not only leaving it behind—you are leaving it below. Meanwhile, you keep zig-zagging up the southern slope of Pewabic Mountain, the same mountain whose northern slopes gives the tourist such a wonderful view as he comes in from Boulder, Nederland or Rollinsville. As you make the last zig-zag and turn from going east to make the last haul west, you will see just at the curve, a road entering on the right. This is the Gillson Gulch road of which I will speak later.

As the shelf road reaches the crest of the divide between water flowing into Clear Creek and its North Fork, the tourist passes from Clear Creek County into Gilpin County. He also enters into the outskirts of Russell Gulch, the fifth of the towns that comprise "The Little Kingdom of Gilpin." Just as he crosses the divide, the tourist will see a road leading off to the left. This road will lead him to a fork, the left-hand one going on down the old Virginia Creek gulch road and the right-hand fork leading around to Bellevue Pt. about which I will say more later.

There is an amusing story told about this divide. When President Grant made his second trip to Central City in April, 1873, he was accompanied by his wife, Miss Nellie Grant, and quite a large party of friends and relatives. When the presidential party left the Teller House for Idaho Springs, they were driven by Jim Allen, "one of the very best of Colorado reinsmen," and his "six dashing bays" hitched to a Concord coach. On the box with him were seated Miss Nellie Grant, Miss Kimberly and General O. E. Babcock. Says a contemporary account:

"Jim planted his right foot firmly on the brake, grasped the reins with the professional clutch, his long whip lash snapped briskly at the heels of the leaders and the whole six sprang for-







## LOOKING DOWN EUREKA STREET TO THE MINES HOTEL

*(This sketch was painted from the steps of the Methodist Church. On the right is Henry M. Teller's original office building, then the Opera House, its garden, the Teller House, Pine St. and the First National Bank Building, now the Post Office. On the left is Washington Hall, the oldest building in town, now the City Hall, the Williams Stables where the exhibitions of square dancing take place, and the REGISTER-CALL building whose third floor is the Masonic Hall. All these buildings are worth serious study.)*

ward on the dead run . . . all in a style to remind old settlers of the palmy times of Holladay or Wells, Fargo.

"Arrived at the divide, the President asked Jim how far it was to the foot of the hill on the other side. 'About four miles,' was the reply. 'How long does it take to go down?' 'About seventeen minutes generally,' says Jim. 'Well, we don't want to run any risks, you see, driver, and if it should take a little longer than



seventeen minutes we shouldn't care.' 'H--l,' says Jim, 'Don't you suppose I think as much of my neck as you do of yours?'"

Russell Gulch in the early days was predominantly Welsh in population, although there were also many Cornish living here. Its placers and mines were discovered by William Green Russell who had first discovered gold in Colorado in 1858, gone back to Georgia for more supplies and men and returned to Gregory Gulch the end of May to find Gregory had 'beat him to the draw.' On June 1, 1859, he and his party found gold in Russell Gulch, a discovery second only to Gregory's in richness.

The tourist passes over Russell Gulch, through the town, over Leavenworth and Illinois Gulches and then comes out on a point at the top of Spring Gulch. Here is by far the best view of the town of Central City and it is well worth the trouble to stop the car and study the buildings below.

It is also a very historic spot. When Gregory discovered gold in Gregory Gulch on May 6, 1859, the news traveled quickly down to 'the valley'—the prairie towns of Arapaho, Auraria and Denver—and back up again to Jackson's Bar, now Idaho Springs. William N. Byers was, at that moment, leading a party of journalists and prospectors in North Clear Creek. When they heard the news where they were making observations of George Jackson's discovery, they crashed up the heavy timber of Virginia Creek, across Russell Gulch (as yet unnamed and undiscovered) and started dropping down into Gregory Gulch from this point.

At that moment, they discerned a figure on the opposite hillside from them, hallooing from the pines. This proved to be Dr. Joseph Casto, who had just discovered the Casto Lead on Casto Hill. He and William Bates had brought the first wagon into the gulch a week before as part of a second detachment of the Gregory party. Instead of following the creek beds, as Gregory had done, he had discovered the 'Hill Difficulty,' Guy Hill, Dory Hill route that he called "the skyline road," the main course of which became the stagecoach route, now No. 58, and Central City's only real outlet to the world.





Byers and Casto were friends. They had traveled West together earlier that spring when Byers brought his press into Auraria, now West Denver, and got out his first issue of the *Rocky Mt. News*, carefully issuing it from an island in Cherry Creek so as not to be a partisan in the feud between the two settlements of Auraria and Denver. Byers and Casto each started down their hillsides and met where Spring, Nevada and Eureka creeks come together to form Gregory.

Soon they were shaking hands and Byers was being led down the gulch to meet Gregory and interview him. This was May 20, 1859, and with that interview, the future of the state of Colorado was assured. As you stand on this spot, think back to that morning and imagine what Byers saw as he answered Casto's halloo—a virgin wilderness filled with tall yellow pine, spruce and firs, aspens in Spring Gulch and, below where the creeks come together, a grove of willows and alders.

As Byers looked at that inviting grove, he decided to camp there—now Central City's Main Street. After Byers got his news, he rushed back to Denver to get out the weekly edition of his paper and herald the discovery of LODE GOLD! Then he hurried back into the mountains and again camped in the willow and alder grove. It was June 1, 1859. He had been gone ten days—and in that time, the population had jumped from twenty men to five thousand. Byers' grove was right in the middle of a series of little settlements, all of them being given high-sounding names.

Byers looked around his grove and as he made camp, said expansively:

"This is Central City!"





# AN ARTIST'S

Drawn by Margaret Kerfoot looking from Central  
the former C. & S. narrow gauge train and the tailings pile to the ex

## BUILDINGS

- |   |   |                                     |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. The Ida Kruse McFarlane Memorial<br>on top of Gunnell Hill | 5. St. James', the Methodist<br>Episcopal Church        | 10. Grade School                    |
| 2. St. Mary's of the Assumption,<br>the Catholic church       | 6. The Teller House, leading hotel                      | 11. St. Paul's Episcopal            |
| 3. Court House of Gilpin County                               | 7. Masonic Hall and Register-Call<br>newspaper building | 12. High School                     |
| 4. The Central City Opera House                               | 8. U. S. Post Office                                    | 13. Dump of the Freed               |
|   | 9. The Mines Hotel                                      | 14. Foundation of the<br>Buell Mill |
|   |   | 15. Monument of the                 |







# CENTRAL CITY

ing and Gregory Gulches to Gunnell and Casto Hills,  
d the beginnings of Mountain City and Blackhawk to the extreme right.

## HILLS

- a. Nigger Hill
- b. Winnebago Hill
- c. Casto Hill

## STREETS

- A. Spring St.
- B. Nevada St.
- C. Bourion St.
- D. Pine St.
- E. Spruce St.
- F. Main St.

- G. Gregory St.
- H. East High St.
- J. Second High St.
- K. Third High St.
- L. Lawrence St.
- M. Fifth High St.
- N. St. James Avenue

- O. County Road
- P. West High St.
- Q. West Fourth St.
- R. Casey Avenue
- S. Tramway Grade
- T. Eureka St.
- U. Fourth High St.



## *Gregory Diggin's--Central City*

One mile of gulch runs between Central City and Blackhawk. This is the former site of Gregory's Diggin's, later called Mountain City, and now included within the city limits of Central City. The tumbling waters of the creek rush much of this distance through a flume, sometimes covered, so that their turbulence is no longer easily studied by the curious. But it was in these same waters one brisk May morning in 1859 that red-bearded John H. Gregory washed out a pan of dirt hauled down from Gregory Point. There was the color that meant four dollars in gold!

The tourist will find the exact spot of this momentous discovery, on his left, as he drives out of Blackhawk up Gregory Gulch toward Central City. The place is now marked with a monument built of native stone in which is imbedded a bronze plaque bearing an inscription. If you stand by the monument and look, first, back up the point and, then, out across the gulch, you can plainly see the outlines of the celebrated Gregory Lode, running in a southwest-northeasterly direction. This vein, which produced \$20,000,000 in gold, is now pitted with old mine shafts and underground cave-ins. But something of its grandeur remains.

As you stand there, imagine how the wilderness looked four weeks after Gregory's find—alive with swarming prospectors tearing up the earth's surface, other men felling enormous spruce trees to make fires, build houses or what was more important to them, fashion sluice boxes. And in all the five thousand inhabitants, there were only seven women. Add another three weeks and there were twenty thousand men in the district. Stores were being opened, miners' courts had been instituted and there were the plats for several little "cities."

Imagine it ten years later when the whole gulch was a solid mass of houses, stores, mills, mines and criss-crossing streets that climbed high on each side of the canyon. Today, most of the houses and mines are gone and only stone walls testify to that former "glory that was gold." But it lives on despite its half-desolate air.





Also, on the left and shortly before one reaches the Gregory Monument, is the entrance to the Bobtail tunnel which cuts into the second richest vein in the district. This mine was named in '59 after an ox with a docked tail. The animal was hitched to the pronged fork of a tree across which its owner had stretched some rawhide. Aided by this strange conveyance and his unusual animal, the miner was in the habit of hauling his pay dirt down to water for washing. In Western fashion, the man was soon nicknamed "Bobtail" and a little later, the name of his lode, too, was Bobtail.

When you come to the place where the gulch widens between Bates Hill (now known as "The Casey") on the right and Mammoth Hill on the left, you are in the heart of what was once busy Mountain City. Here was the scene of many a colorful Cornish wrestling match played in special jackets. Here on Christmas Eve the Cornish miners went from house to house, and mine to mine, singing carols, their rich full voices resonant with strangely beautiful minor key harmonizations. It was also the scene of tragedy in 1895 when the waters of the Fisk mine broke into the Sleepy Hollow and Americus and drowned fourteen men, Cornish and Tyrolean miners.

Still earlier than that, in 1860, it was the home of Hadley's Hall where Mlle. Rose Haidee with her acting and dancing became the miners' sweetheart. But she ran away with a gambler and in the midst of a scandal that turned into a marriage, humiliated them all. Her star was short-lived. Also, to Hadley's Hall in the same year, came another and different kind of popular personality, Father Machebeuf. He drove into town behind his legendary ambulance drawn by cream mules to hold the first Catholic mass in the district.

Also in Mountain City is the spot where the first Masonic Temple between the Missouri River and the Pacific Coast was erected. The building was of logs and the roof was of poles placed together, called "shooks," and covered with pine boughs and earth. The early Masons of the diggings built the temple, themselves, in June, 1859,



and under the leadership of Dr. Joseph Casto, the first meeting was held about the twentieth of that month.

Today, a monument of Silver Plume granite inlaid with a bronze tablet has been placed on the site by the Masons. To reach this spot, the tourist should turn off the main road up from Blackhawk to Central City, at the first branch to the left. This is Gregory St. and will bring him into Central City via either Spring St. or Main

### THE CATHOLIC ST. MARY'S OF THE ASSUMPTION

*(This parish was originally called St. Patrick's. The first church on this site was dedicated in 1866 by Archbishop Lamy of Santa Fe who made a five hundred mile trip for the occasion to assist his good friend, Father Machebeuf—the two priests who have been immortalized in Willa Cather's DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP. That structure later burned and this building dates from 1892. In the background may be seen the pyramidic outlines of the Chain O' Mines mill's tailings pile.)*







St. instead of Lawrence St. and, incidentally, with much more likelihood of finding parking space.

Just beyond the Masonic monument are the massive stone walls of the former Buell mill, one of the oldest and most active in the district. At one time, this mill, the Kip and Buell mine and the Bobtail were worked by W. A. Clark, later a copper king and senator from Montana. Its walls are characteristic of the fine Cornish stonework to be found throughout the district.

Whether one has arrived in Central via Spring and Roworth Sts. from Idaho Springs or via Gregory or Lawrence Sts. from Blackhawk, the tourist will be struck immediately with what Robert Edmond Jones, producer of the Festival's "Camille" and several subsequent offerings, calls "the stark beauty" of the town. Until one has become accustomed to the camp's individual fascination, you may not agree with this distinguished artist's verdict. You may think it ugly.

But loose yourself from conventional pretty-pretty standards and take a second look. Notice the unique cuplike setting, the soft tapestry colors of the mine dumps and the tailings pile, and the modernistic lines of the surrounding mountains. At first, you will miss the trees, those Western monarchs cut down for cordwood, building houses and timbering mines, or burned off by forest fires. But when you have grown used to seeing only the gentle second growth of aspen and Balm of Gilead, you will see that the landscape and town are truly invigorating and provocative, things of "stark beauty."



## *Sightseeing in Central City\**

There is only one proper way to see this unique mining camp—afoot—and I don't mean with high heels. Come to Central well-equipped to walk and to climb. There are any number of rewarding short tours within the city limits; and even finer ones for those pedestrians who will undertake a couple of miles or so.

Central has three principal streets—Main which runs north and south, and where Main intersects a street following the continuous line of Eureka and Gregory Gulches, it creates the other two. Above the intersection, the east-west street is known as Eureka St.; below, as Lawrence St. The pictorial map in the center will illustrate this peculiarity.

Where Main Street forks at its southern end, it becomes Nevada St., leading up Nevada Gulch toward Nevadaville, and straight ahead, Spring St., up Spring Gulch toward Idaho Springs—except that for a block prior to the first sharp turn, it is Roworth while Spring branches to the left to later rejoin itself! However, don't let these difficulties about nomenclature dismay you. There are many residents of Central who have lived there for years and never mastered these intricacies. I merely put you straight so that if you are a conscientious sightseer, you will be able to follow later instructions.

At the southern end of Main St. in what is now a dignified brick residence with a gorgeous spruce tree standing proudly in the yard, Central City's one flashy variety hall, "The Shoo-Fly," used to blare music across the gulch to the respectable side of town on Casto Hill. When the beautiful Elizabeth McCourt Doe, later to be known to the world as Baby Doe Tabor, began to differ with her weakling husband, Harvey Doe, she used to go to "The Shoo-Fly" to dance with Jack Sands. (He was the friend who loaned her the money in 1879 to go to the new bonanza town of Lead-

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\*It is strongly advised that for following the directions in this section and in the following one, the tourist buy the full-sized edition of maps reproduced in this guide opposite the title page and in the center of the booklet. The price is 35 cents.





ville. There, in the Saddle Rock Cafe on Harrison Ave., she met H. A. W. Tabor, the fabulous silver king—and so began her sky-rocketing love story that has found its way into countless newspapers, magazines, books and one movie, "Silver Dollar.") \*

The whole length of Main Street you will find a number of antique and souvenir shops, the Submarine Museum (where Fred de Mandel has gathered a nice collection of historical exhibits around the rusted submarine that he exhumed from Missouri Lake,—see page 15) and several places of amusement. One of the antique shops has been renovated with expert attention to Victorian detail and carries an absolutely correct two-toned tan and brown painted front. In general, however, the old world atmosphere of the camp has been more tampered with here than in other sectors.

Inside Persons' Saloon, you will find two nineteenth century Western paintings by H. H. Tallman, entitled "Flowers" and "Dawn Over the Rockies." They are rather late in period as the artist came West in 1890 and their Victorian frames have been modernized; but they are worth stepping in to see as an example of what the prosperous residents hung on their walls around the turn of the century. (Mr. Persons found these paintings in an old, deserted house he bought for the tax title.)

At the corner of Main and Lawrence Streets is the Mines Hotel. Its exterior still presents all the old lines, the authentic cream paint color with brown lintels and trim, and a quaint mining-camp irregularity about its dimensions. But the interior has been modernized with no appreciation of its dramatic history—on its back steps Sheriff Williams, owner of Dad Williams' Stables, was shot and killed by a desperado; its present-day coffee shop once housed the most popular gambling place in town; and its corner was Goldman's Saloon with a cosmopolitan clientele that made

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\*"Silver Queen," a five-part serial by Caroline Bancroft, appearing in TRUE STORY, January-May, 1938, told the full story of Baby Doe Tabor's life from her girlhood in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, to her tragic end at the Matchless Mine in Leadville in 1935. "Silver Queen" may be read in the Western History Department of the Denver Public Library.



the five-o'clock drinkers seem more like a club. But from within, no hint of this past remains. Study the building, instead, from up Eureka St.

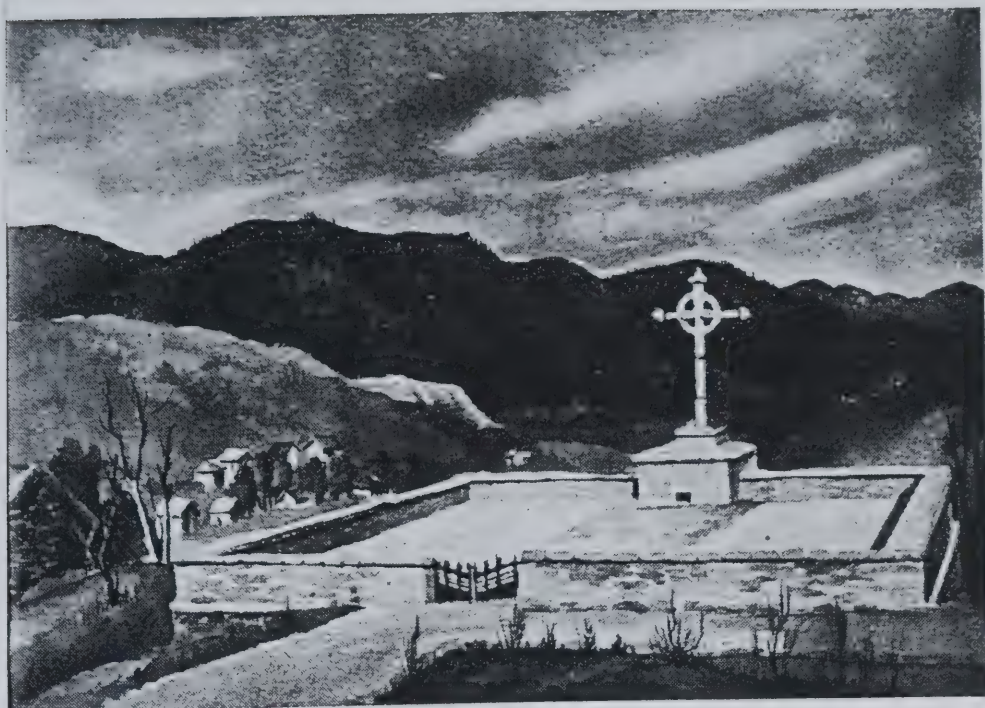
On Eureka St. and its lower part, called Lawrence St., you will find more antique and souvenir shops, two restaurants—Ramstetter's and the Grubstake Inn—and a store that has the most atmosphere of any in camp. It is the Jenkins-McKay Hardware, housed in a stunning red and white authentic Victorian building and run by the Mayor of Central City, John C. Jenkins. He has an old-time safe in which are stored away nuggets, gold watch fobs, Clark and Gruber coins (minted by a private bank before U. S. coinage was sufficient) and other treasures of pioneer Central City. During the Festival, he is too busy to show his hoard. But come by on a snowy day when his base-burner offers the warmest spot in town, and perhaps you'll be lucky . . .

Eureka Street is the place that presents a host of fine old buildings. The First National Bank Building (now the Post Office), the Teller House, the *Register-Call* and Masonic building, the Opera House, Washington Hall (now the City Hall), the Methodist Church and the two little bargeboard decorated law offices of Henry M. Teller, later senator and Secretary of the Interior in President Arthur's cabinet, and of Harper M. Orahood, later a Judge, are all within a few steps of each other.

The City Hall and the law offices are the oldest buildings in Central City, dating from the early '60s. The City Hall was built by William Z. Cozens, first sheriff of Gilpin County, of native logs and is ceiled and sided. It was used as a combination court house, jail, public meeting place and sheriff's residence during the '60s and early '70s. Many of the state's present-day mining laws were formulated in this historic spot, largely by Judge James B. Belford, later Colorado's first Representative to Congress. (Judge Belford built the first brick residence in Central City—now owned by his daughter, Frances Wayne of *The Denver Post*.) The law offices, now owned by the Central City Opera Association, are







### THE IDA KRUSE MCFARLANE MEMORIAL

*(On this site stood the former St. Aloysius Academy run by Catholic sisters from early in the '70s until 1917 when it closed. But the three-storied building, itself, with a story high cupola tower and this cross aloft of the tower, was the most dominating feature of Central City until late in the 1930s when the building was dismantled. Mrs. McFarlane, grieved by its destruction, saved the cross. After her death in 1940, a rock-walled lookout was built and the cross again raised.)*

notable for their pretty bargeboard trim and the authentic colors in which Burnham Hoyt, Denver architect, has renovated them.

The *Register-Call* building is the oldest stone building in town. It dates from 1864 to which was added, shortly after, the third story for a Masonic Temple. The front facade has been renovated but with every effort made to preserve the old effect in new materials. The exquisitely handsome lamps were originally on Denver's old Post Office at 16th and Arapahoe Sts., the same building for which Tabor gave the ground when he was rich as



Midas, and in which he spent his last days as an humble Federal employee. The lamps were installed in 1945 at their present place, and very fittingly, through the efforts of the late Percy Alsdorf, always very active in the Masonic Order.

The interior of this building is well worth viewing, if one receives an invitation. The press room of the newspaper is full of antiquities—wood type, copper-faced pica type, and imposing stones, brought from Norway, hauled West by oxcart in 1865 and still in daily use. The Masonic Temple has twenty-two murals, painted by candlelight in the '60s and still in good condition. The artists had to ply their trade by day as house painters and by night, they were prohibited from using kerosene lights by a city ordinance since the fumes were thought to be injurious to the health. Those portions of the murals and the life-sized portrait of George Washington that were executed by John Y. Glendinen show definite talent. He was a Scotsman who made the perilous Indian-infested trip back across the continent in 1864 and to Europe to study art for several months, before returning to Central City.

The Methodist Church is the next oldest building of this group although it was not actually finished until July, 1872, a month after the grand opening ball of the Teller House in June. The walls of St. James were started in 1864 on the site where the Rev. C. W. Fisher preached in the open air during the summer of 1859. But the parish ran into a series of building difficulties not to be met with their insufficient funds so that for a number of years the congregation met in the basement, a room that is still used for church suppers. They had a most active and interesting minister, the Rev. B. T. Vincent. For a number of years beginning in 1863, he published a small religious paper for juveniles, "The Casket," now an enormously valuable collector's item.

The Teller House was started by popular movement in 1870 because the camp felt the need for more adequate hotel accommodations. At that time, there was only one hotel in town, the Connor House, which had mattresses, the others having nothing but





hay beds. A mass meeting was held in Washington Hall and \$10,000 raised by subscription when Teller offered to supply the rest of the capital. The total cost of the ground, hotel and furnishings, when completed, was quoted at \$107,000. The hotel was supplied with water from the Teller Springs in Prosser Gulch and "was conveyed to each floor through pipes of sufficient capacity not only for domestic use, but for the extinguishment of fires when necessary."

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For years, the Teller House was the center of all social and business activity of the district. Its clientele was so cosmopolitan that hardly a day went by when the hotel register did not contain names from all over the world—titled personages, bankers, investors, mining engineers and tourists. The ladies who walked in the lobby, Central Cityites and their visiting friends, were often as not gowned by Worth of Paris.

President Grant was given a lavish dinner and reception here in 1873. His party had come by train as far as Blackhawk and then was driven to Central City by stagecoach. When he alighted in Eureka St., he found the entrance to the Teller House paved with solid silver ingots, bars which had just been completed at the Colorado smelter from a run of ore of the Caribou mine. As he and his party alighted and walked over this glittering path, there were cries and expressions of incredulity. But the President was assured that he had just passed over a sum well in excess of twelve thousand dollars!

Today, the Teller House has been renovated in the best and most expensive taste, with a view to making it a repository of the finest Victorian furnishings. Old Colorado families—the Evans, Everett, Kassler, Grant, Bancroft, McFarlane and others—have donated heirlooms in keeping with the nineteenth century style of the hotel, and its lavishness is now a mecca for the sightseer. Mildred Fuller Hoyt of Denver has been in charge of the interior decoration and when the building is not too occupied with guests, a very delightful guide service is supplied, giving one the history and background of each room's furnishings. In a small room just





### ST. JAMES METHODIST CHURCH

*(This building stands at the corner of County Road and Eureka Street. In the early days, its parish was almost all Cornish and the quality of its choir-singing was praised by every visiting author.)*

off the dining room on the second floor, you will find some dainty gold furniture and an unusual jewel box. These belonged at one time to Baby Doe Tabor and were used in her suite at the Windsor Hotel in Denver.

The lobby of the Teller House is also a veritable museum and the tourist may spend considerable time there profitably. The bar of the hotel contains old Victorian murals, lost for decades under fourteen layers of wall paper, but rediscovered and restored by





Pascal Quackenbush in 1931, the year of preparation for the first Festival. Also, in the bar is that much publicized item of folklore, "The Face on the Bar Room Floor," painted by Herndon Davis in 1936 from previous outlines which he swears he saw there at three o'clock in the morning.

The Opera House has been so frequently described and has been so fully dealt with elsewhere (see opening remarks and back page) that I advise the reader to amplify his knowledge with a further choice. It was completed in 1878 with four-foot stone walls, murals by J. C. Massman of San Francisco (later restored by Allen True of Denver), extraordinary acoustics and Eureka Creek gurgling beneath an audience chamber filled with hand-carved hickory chairs, the whole project a strictly community affair managed by an association.

The Cornish who worked in the mines contributed their lovely voices and the knowledge they had gained in England of building with stone. The Irish contributed their love of the theatre and their delight in all sorts of fun. The Austrians contributed their technical knowledge of music and of fingering on the violin. Mining engineers, professors, company managers, and bankers whose homes had first been New York, Boston or London, added their bit, taking part in the organization or playing roles in the productions.

In March, the townspeople opened with the first of their two-evening gala initiation of their own handiwork in every sense. Their first production was an operetta, while on the second evening with an entirely different cast, they performed a straight play. Special trains ran from Denver, carrying guests laden with luggage filled with the best satins and broadcloth, chefs bringing the finest oysters and champagne to serve at late suppers, and society reporters to cover the affair for the Denver newspapers. Colorado was all agog over the occasion.

The Opera House was now launched on a long and glorious history. Many famous nineteenth century actors, actresses and opera singers trod its stage until the decline of the district. Then



the building fell on bad days, deteriorating first to a movie house, and when the population of Central had fallen in the 1920s from five thousand to two hundred, to a ruin with rats running in the dressing rooms and the waters of Eureka Creek eating away its supports.

But in 1931, the late Ida Kruse McFarlane, persuaded the heirs of her father-in-law (who held the mortgage) to clear the title and present the building to the University of Denver. With that gesture began a sky-rocketing renaissance for the handsome structure. The re-opening in July, 1932, was attended with even more fanfare than the original. The entire first night audience arrived in period costume of the '70s and '80s. Newsreel men cranked out yards of film and society reporters were scurrying around for technical descriptions of heirloom dresses. The key to the door was formally presented to the Chancellor of the University and at the end of the performance, the audience tossed quaint flowered nosegays on the stage in heart-warming appreciation of a truly thrilling evening.

For ten years, the Central City Opera House Association formed under the leadership of Mrs. McFarlane and the late Anne Evans, daughter of the second territorial governor of Colorado, carried on the high tradition of the past. The Opera House was the focal point of all the Gay Festival activities which, under the vaulting imagination of these two unusual women, kept expanding each year. The building, itself, was repaired and renovated; the old musical balustrade which had decorated the front but been destroyed, was copied and replaced by Alan Fisher, Denver architect, and fire exits were added.

Each season the Association attracted to itself more enthusiastic workers and increasingly generous donors. In those years prior to World War II, the Association treated the theatrical and operatic world to eleven productions, distinguished in tone and a delight to the audience. These began in 1932 with Robert Edmond Jones presentation of "Camille," starring Lillian Gish, and closed with the two operas produced by Frank St. Leger, a director of





the Metropolitan Opera House: "The Barber of Seville" with Stella Andrevia and John Brownlee and "Orpheus" with Anna Kaskas and Margit Bokor.

But the War cancelled all that. From 1941 to 1946, the Opera House was dark except for occasional specially-arranged sight-seeing parties, the opening of the Sixth War Loan with a production of Phil Baker's "Take It or Leave It" program broadcast from the Opera House stage, and a special nation-wide Association

### ORIGINAL CENTRAL CITY SCHOOL BUILDING

*(The Central City School, now used as a high school, was opened in the autumn of 1870 with a bell that still tolls, calling 214 pupils together under the principalship of that distinguished educator, Horace M. Hale, later president of the University of Colorado and father of General Irving Hale, hero of the Battle of Manila and born in Central City. Prior to the erection of this building, school attendance, since its opening with 116 pupils in 1862, had been in a variety of rented rooms.)*





broadcast in 1945 presenting Robert Edmond Jones and songs by Josephine Antoine and Anna Kaskas, former Central City stars. Except for these brief occasions scattered through five years, the glamorous building was silenced in sorrow.

Frank St. Leger says that one of the greatest thrills of his life was to pick up the baton for a production of "Orpheus" and sense the enthralled hush of the audience behind him, an audience that had come miles, some even across the continent, to hear a gem of an opera in this jewelled setting. May you, too, be as uplifted by attending a performance in the beautiful building, as many another has been before you, and may you go away feeling that here high in the Rockies, working against terrific obstacles, has culminated, both in the past and in the present, a flowering within these stone walls of all that is finest in the American tradition. Work, art, and civic spirit made in the first place, and have kept alive, the Central City Opera House.



## *Suggested Walks*

### TO THE MEMORIAL

For the first walk, I suggest the tourist stroll through the Opera House garden, observing the beer garden murals in the box office arcade, the hand-hewn piles used for stamps in the early mills, the Spanish arastra turned by mules to crush ore in '59 and the entrance to what "Uncle Billy" Hamilton, custodian of the Opera House and great raconteur, calls the Opera Lode.

As a matter of fact, it used to be possible by drifting through the Grand Army workings on Gunnell Hill, to be lowered into the Argo Tunnel which, running south for five miles, comes out in Clear Creek Canyon just below Idaho Springs. Courtney Ryley Cooper used this fact for the denouement of his novel, "The Cross Cut," and "Uncle Billy" will tell you that you can go into the Opera Lode tunnel and come out for a drink of sulphur water in Idaho Springs—almost the least of his tall tales, since with very little excavating the trip could be made true.

Walk up the steps from the garden to Spruce St., on which used to be, at its juncture with Pine St., four large white "houses" where drinks and rowdy hospitality were dispensed by girls-of-the-evening. (These houses have since burned or decayed and only their stone retaining walls stand.) Cross over Spruce St. and follow the walk around till it comes out on the crest of Gunnell Hill. Here is the Ida Kruse McFarlane Memorial with a perfectly superb view of the whole town and down the length of Gregory Gulch.

From there, you can go on to the Coeur d'Alene mine and further, to the Masonic cemetery on the real top of Gunnell Hill. (All the cemeteries of the district have charm, especially Bald Mountain, and should not be missed.) At that point, you can return to town by way of Nevada St., making a pleasant round-trip, finishing up by taking Bourion St. to Pine St. and in the back door of the Teller House.







## ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*(The cornerstone laid in 1873 by Bishop George Randall, after the first frame church of 1863 had burned, contains copies of Colorado newspapers, a Bible and a prayer book, silver coinage, a four dollar bill, three cents currency of 1863, 1872 Colorado wheat and a contemporary view of Central City.)*

Bourion St. was named for Father Bourion, parish priest from 1871 on, who lived in the church manse at the head of this short lane. Pine St. was a row of gambling houses and cheap rooming houses which added to the questionable reputation of the south side of town. As you pass from Pine St. back on to Eureka, you can hear the creek gurgling below in the flume and can easily picture how Brett Halliday came to write the mystery, "Murder Wears a Mummer's Mask."



### TO THE FREEDOM DUMP

Walk up the *Register-Call* steps opposite the Teller House, jog left at the top and take St. James Avenue straight up Casto Hill to Fifth High St. After a few rods going east, take the left hand fork which will lead you up on the former grade of the Gilpin County Tramway. Again go east until you come to a large dump on the right-hand side, just at the brow of the hill. Walk out on the dump and look up, all the way to Nevadaville, and down to Chase Gulch and Blackhawk on the left side of "The Casey" and Gregory Gulch and the Peak-to-Peak Highway on the right. Directly beneath you is Mountain City. This is my favorite view of the camp.

From here, you will see Gunnell Hill better than from any other spot and will be able to speculate easily on those first two bonanza kings of the district—Pat Casey and Harry Gunnell. Harry Gunnell was a charming, young, educated New Yorker who drifted into camp in May, 1859, knowing nothing at all about prospecting or mining.

He made friends with the Gregory party and Wilkes DeFrees showed him how to use a gold pan. When they found a likely looking place, Harry scooped up a pan of dirt and took it down to the creek to wash, while Wilkes sat on a ledge waiting for him. Soon Harry shouted back up:

"Eureka! I've got it!"

And so he had. The Gunnell Lode proved to be the third richest in the district and Harry had six years of entertaining his friends, making rich gifts, and driving beautiful girls behind prancing horses, only to die, penniless and broken, at the age of thirty-four. All that is left are the two names that he gave the camp—Gunnell and Eureka.

Now look down at the spur of Casto Hill, named for Pat Casey, because of the \$2000 road he built over its saddle as a short-cut from his mine in Nevadaville to his mill in Chase Gulch. Pat was an illiterate Irish immigrant,—rollicking, dashing and bellicose,—whose pretentions and good luck have made him the most legend-





ary figure of the district. He, too, arrived in May, 1859, a day laborer who staked out a claim next to the Burroughs brothers on Quartz Hill, a seemingly rich mine that petered out or went 'in cap' (as the pioneers said). Pat went back to wage-earning.

But a lucky cave-in showed up a rich body of ore and Pat became the first bonanza king of the district, selling out his mine to Wall St. and starting a terrific speculation in Gilpin County mines during '63 and '64. He drove the smartest turn-out in New York for a time. But when last heard of, he was a penniless prospector in the '76 rush to Deadwood, South Dakota. All that remains of him are a road, a hill and countless "Pat Casey" stories—but nothing of his gold.

The real walker can continue on around on the Tram grade to gorgeous Castle Rock. Or take the Tram grade, west, until it enters Eureka St. and come down through what is sometimes called "the Park Avenue of Central City." Here many summer residents have renovated houses but with indifferent consideration to authenticity. Flat white was seldom used by the more elegant Central Cityites—they always relieved it with Victorian trimming in mahogany, green, buff, chocolate or some such, but not seashore blue. For all-over paint, they generally preferred tans, greys, pinks, or yellows with either white trim, or a color contrasting or harmonizing according to their taste. You have already seen many fine examples of the real thing on Casto Hill—and, incidentally, don't miss the Lee House on County Road as a fine Victorian brick residence, and also as the setting of Elizabeth Dean's mystery, "Murder a Mile High."



## *Suggested Drives*

### TO BELLEVUE POINT

The most breath-taking view of the whole district will be found at this point. (I have already given instructions for finding the road in the section on the Virginia Creek Shelf Road, and if the tourist has bought the auxiliary large maps, the point is plainly marked.) You stand here on the dump of the Champion mine and look down into the canyons of Clear Creek and Fall River. By night, you can see the lights of the cars coming down U. S. 40 from Berthoud Pass (which is just in back of the first snow mountain on the left) and with good eyesight, you can pick them out by day. The string of white-capped peaks which form the Continental Divide and the backbone of your view, read from left to right—Cone, Flora, Witter (with a cliff-like right side), Eva, Bancroft (with three humps) and James (through which runs the Moffat Tunnel, the seven-mile railway bore of the Denver and Rio Grande).

### TO THE SUN AND MOON MINE AND GILLSON GULCH

For this drive, you take the lower road from Central into Russell Gulch and fork over the bridge before coming into the village proper. No drive will give you a better idea of "the richest square mile on earth" than this one nor of the extent of activity that once existed. If you take this drive in the early autumn, I guarantee you will find more glorious red-gold aspen branches to pick than in any other sector of Colorado that I know.

The Sun and Moon mine was the scene of a *cause celebre* of the early twentieth century when labor troubles were rampant. A strike of the Western Federation of Miners had been on for several weeks. The Sun and Moon started up again, employing non-union men, when a night watchman was killed by a keg of dynamite which was rolled down the hill back of the mine and blew up the transformer house. Curiously enough, all the buildings of the Sun and Moon, except this one, are in Clear Creek County and the



citizens of Idaho Springs in July, 1903, became so incensed that a vigilante committee ran all the union leaders out of town.

Later, a long-drawn-out fiery murder trial was held in the Central City courthouse. It failed to prove anything for want of evidence, although it did succeed in smearing the good name of the union. This was probably not serious as mining in Gilpin County began to fall off about that time anyway.

The Gillson Gulch road cuts into the Virginia Creek Road and the motorist may return to Central by that route.

#### TO THE COLORADO CARR

This mine has a very romantic and dramatic history. It was owned in the '70s by old King Leopold of Belgium, and in 1938 when it was opened up after two decades' shut-down, it disclosed an unidentified body with a GOTT MIT UNS buckle on a European belt. The mine also has a wonderful view; this time, to the East. You can see the prairie beyond Denver, and at night, the lights of cars coming over Genesee, and the air-beacon south of Lowry, flashing. To reach it, you pass Dry Lake, formerly the scene of gay boating and summer hotels. When Pat Casey was asked if he would contribute to the purchase of a gondola for the lake, he replied:

"Sure, an' here's an ixtra fiver. Get two and let them breed."

#### TO THE CEMETERIES

There are eight cemeteries within short driving distance of the town of Central City and all are worth spending time in, noting the quaintness of the headstones and the hints of life's drama in a pioneer community. The Dory Hill cemetery has a very unusual grave whose headstone was a subscription project years after the much-beloved character of Blackhawk had died. This is the memorial to "Nigger Jennie" and carries a picture of her in a little copper slot. The setting of the Bald Mountain cemetery is one of the most serene in the world and many former Gilpin County residents insist on being brought back to this charming hillside for a final resting place.





### TO THE GLORY HOLE

This stupendous cavern 500 feet deep by 900 feet across, was made by the dynamiting of tons of low-grade ore which, after it exploded, fell on grizzlies at the bottom of the hole, was let through shutes into ore cars in a tunnel below, trundled out by electric motors to the Chain O' Mines mill, run at the rate of 1200 tons a day over the Wilfley flotation tables to extract the gold, and its worthless remains of country rock deposited in the tailings pile. That great pyramid you see in Central City used to be in this hole.

Do not drive close to the edge, as both sides cave easily, and do not throw rocks in the hole—their impact is likely to start dangerous landslides. But don't miss the chance to see the astounding testimony of man's energy for wresting gold from the bowels of the earth. The returns were not so high as from the Gregory, the Bobtain or the Gunnell, but some \$3,000,000 was extracted by this dramatic method, known as Glory Hole mining. Operations ceased in 1936 and since then, no men drill its sides with holes for dynamite. Only a lonely owl lives in the Glory Hole.





### More Aspects of Central City by the Same Author

"The Elusive Figure of John H. Gregory, Discoverer of the First Gold Lode in Colorado," *Colorado Magazine*, July, 1943.

"Cousin Jack Stories from Central City," *Colorado Magazine*, March, 1944.

"Central City: Colorado's Salzburg," *Ghost Town News*, April, 1945.

"Folklore of the Central City District, Colorado," *California Folklore Quarterly*, October, 1945.

(Wayland Hand, America's foremost authority on mining folklore, says in the April, 1946, issue of the *California Folklore Quarterly*:

"Caroline Bancroft's 'Folklore of the Central City District, Colorado' is, I believe, the most complete treatment of Cornish lore yet to appear in this country. Her study is more than a dissertation on the folklore of the Cornish miner of the Central City district; it is a general survey of the customs and traditions of the Cornish people who settled there. . . . A good knowledge of the old-country background enabled Miss Bancroft to rescue from almost sure oblivion many an interesting item in the last stages of obsolescence. . . .")



### Recommended Reading

For further historic details of buildings and institutions: *Historical Souvenir of Central City, Colorado*, by Minnie B. Morgan; *The Little Kingdom* by Lynn I. Perigo, and *Ghost Cities of Colorado*, by Muriel V. Sibell.

For theatrical history: "The Opera House at Central City," by Charles Bayly, *Theatre Arts Monthly*, March, 1932, and *From Candles to Footlights* by Melvin Schoberlin.

For reminiscences: "Early Day Memories," by Frank Belford, *Register-Call*, July 29, 1932; "Early Days of Central City," by C. H. Hanington, *Colorado Magazine*, July, 1942, and "Turning Back the Pages," by H. H. Lake, *Register-Call*, July 16, 1937.

For well-written atmosphere: *Here They Dug the Gold*, by George Willison, and the poem, "Magenta" in *Westering* by Thomas Hornsby Ferril.



(All items may be obtained in the Western History Department of the Denver Public Library)













